

# DELTA

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# delta

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## C O N T E N T S

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## EDITORIAL

With this issue *Delta* completes its fifth year of publication. Beginning solely as the "Cambridge Magazine of Verse", it has become, partly through a decline in the standard of verse-writing in Cambridge, a general literary review, by no means confined to verse nor to Cambridge.

We do still aim, however, to publish the best Cambridge verse that we can gather, in the hope that our influence may help to restore the standard. In our next issue, in October, we should like to start the new academic year by publishing as many Cambridge poets as we can find.

Contributions of verse, short stories, critical articles, and correspondence are invited, and should be sent to the Editor at Corpus Christi College before the end of term.

In this issue we print two letters criticising Richard Weber's articles in our Irish Supplement of February. Unfortunately, Mr. Weber is not available to reply. We should perhaps once again make it clear that the opinions of our contributors do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Editors.

Acknowledgments are due to *Poetry and Audience* for permission to reprint two poems by David Marno.

We would like to thank Philip Hobsbaum for his help in compiling this issue: also all others who have assisted in the production and distribution of the magazine, and especially the Committee:

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## *Images of the Future*

These images provoke one; or rather, should provoke :  
The jackboot as it scrunches on the upturned cobbles  
Made of faces; these are known as 'the troubles';  
Consider blank eyes ungelled from their yolk

By a fine drizzle, not life-giving rain,  
But a sea-fret of atoms from an atoll reef  
Visiting with malaise the child unborn;  
Shattering our apathy and unbelief.

This must be dwelt on. This is the future  
For all mere onlookers who refuse to act,  
And whose refusal multiplies their guilt.  
Like patient negroes they live under a vulture's

Lengthening shadow which courses shanty-towns and veldt;  
They deserve the gunmen who long to dispossess and loot.

DAVID MARNO.

## *Winter Season*

Now we take stock; retrench, hoard against winter,  
Lest piercing draughts enter.

Take, say a jerrican; pour paraffin in the stove,  
Which patterns the ceiling above

As the wick fumes, gives off a welcome heat,  
Illumines the dense profound of night.

We exclude cold air, cold facts, whenever possible,  
Though we enjoy the snow's close shingle

Laid as on some remote and stellar beach.  
Oh how avoid the tense clutch

Of frost with such devices? The stove's warmth  
May rise as far as the plinth,

May keep the various heats in, and rawness out,  
Yet can never wholly dispel doubt

Which on the parchment snow will leave no print,  
But stalks my footmarks. Perhaps a final hint.

DAVID MARNO.



## *Sick-room at Home*

Your stomach, darling, is upset,  
Your head runs its cold, yet  
From the bed you smile on the room  
For love of love; your head assumes  
A bright sickness and your eyes  
Flavour our dry temerity.  
Our quiet is the spoken words of fear,  
Yours the waxy entering ear  
That takes your sick-room pulsing in  
Through the wireless anodyne;  
Ours too this waiting, healthy on chairs,  
For further lovers down the stairs.  
We do not know whose kiss has bled  
The pale lips on the vivid bed  
But wait still as the coughing comes  
For your eyes, some sick-bed crumbs.

PETER PORTER.

## *Once Bitten, Twice Bitten*

The trap setter in a steel dawn  
Picks up his dead rabbits and goes home  
Whistling : his tune lies over the wet fields  
In the morning's shadows.  
Five broken backs for the rabbits  
Dangling in his hessian wrap;  
In his own house an old mother  
Wastes herself for a busy cancer,  
She has always sacrificed flesh  
And time for others—a thin heart  
Hates a fat man in the same room;  
Outside two healthy children chase  
A cockerel from a hen, their sister  
In love with a school teacher  
Pushes back the sex in her dark blue blouse.  
Now the house basks in bridal sun  
Brimming with doves; this is where  
The dead rabbits come giving life  
For which the fat dog forgets his mange  
Licking his master's feet who carries his bundle  
To his tired wife in the kitchen.  
It is eleven o'clock—the stewing meat  
Smells savoury past the pruned back roses  
And wafts on the street's spindly limits,  
The only fragrance of defence and love.

PETER PORTER.

## *All Other Time Is Peace*

What is locked in a book  
Of a Civil War : of a king  
Watching over the unwall'd marshes,  
Of disease in the Long Walls awaiting  
A hot day, of panic and cold night marches  
To cities on heavy plains  
Is history which once was done  
Congregationally in the sun  
For the living who will remain.

While the city burned to the water  
And the merchants sailed away,  
Murder, the child's friend, wept  
The four-sided dead : Where are they,  
Foul and alone, the well-kept  
Of time? Asleep, which is death  
And can not be slept out,  
Where they lie mouth to mouth,  
Apart, not kept together by breath.

Main peace is worn down  
To fear and the glamorous war :  
Friend for his friend gives away  
That life, his Sanitary Law  
He knows he still must obey.  
All time is war and all men  
Live in the picture of death,  
The Heaven and Hell they bequeath  
Is old time, old peace again.

PETER PORTER.

## *Lecture Notes*

Let us pass on  
to consider the influence of Anglo-Norman  
to walk through the window and jump out of the door  
to say quite quietly, risen from the dead  
I, I am Pop-eye, the Sailor Man

Let us pass on, O let us pass on  
to the liquidation of Narcissus  
to the decapitation of Father Christmas  
to the final boiling of glass eyes.

MARTIN BELL.

## *Fiesta Mask*

The raw feast rages in its fierce buffoons,  
Flares in hot air. Calliope blares red.  
Streamers, confetti, squeakers, and fat balloons.  
Here comes a great, big, daft, nid-nodding head—

A painted acre of face, a carnival grin,  
With snorting nostrils, glistening carbuncles :  
And children cringe, afraid to be sucked in  
And eaten up by wickedest of uncles.

Once upon a time some small boys found  
In the next daylight's debris, after the revels  
Had guttered down—the giant stretched on the ground,  
Stupid in drunken sleep. The young devils

Began by throwing pebbles to sound the big head,  
To find just what was under the disguise—  
Started to claw the cardboard into shreds,  
And one little bastard was kicking at plaster eyes.

Battered at the craters he was breathing beer through,  
Tore cheeks away in chunks. He didn't groan.  
Soon there ragged gaps enough to peer through.  
And the squealing stopped. As if they'd been turned to stone.

MARTIN BELI..

## *Open-Air Conservative*

Cry the man who clings to tidy worlds,  
Who sits among his wife's friends now he's old,  
And sees and hears only the respected past.

Now he has lawns on different levels,  
Laurels to hide the damp gravel walk  
Where tradesmen whistle—fruit trees  
In a lane of thin earth—burgeoning lettuces  
He gives away to friends.

In damp familiar June he spreads  
His garden for the Party—sees  
Immanent women set stalls—sees  
His daughter's friends avoid him.



Young wives push children—rampant  
In coloured paper—to face an M.P.  
In a tight silk dress. Their mothers  
Lean thickly against the white cloths  
To hold them and keep safe the whips, the knobs,  
The fretted things left when the silk scarf,  
The cheese dish and the cakes have gone.

Children who have joyously refused to start young,  
Stealthily, then shouting, tread down the faint geraniums.  
The middle of the unwatered lawn is empty  
Crossed sometimes by young wives in pink sandals  
Or white sudden hats.

A little boy as a marigold walks about  
Emasculated by huge, orange paper petals.  
And all the time a bloated thrush hops gravely  
In the weeds among the laurels that hide the gravel walk.

The Colonel, tired now, bends his head politely  
Towards the women—and his pale, year-frozen eyes  
Flicker towards the children—running and stamping  
On the thin earth among the thin dry trees.

MARGARET OWEN.

## *A Fine Romance*

The letter flung with casual art upon the table  
So as to reveal the signature, the conversation  
Deftly directed towards the gratifying anecdote,  
And the passing mention—just as a matter of interest—  
Were rather like the impressive stack of magazines  
Which he never actually *read*, or the correspondence perpetually  
On the point of being answered : his fictive passion,  
An unstable structure of off-hand allusions  
("How well", with a smile, "they seem to hit it off!"),  
Was nicer to contemplate than what actually happened.

Only sometimes, after passing with her an evening  
When his banalities were only brought forth with considerable  
labour,  
And not always then,  
He would pick up a book and make a scrupulous effort  
Not to count quite so often the number of pages remaining.

JOHN KIMBER.

# *The Beggar Boy*

*(an incident taken from a longer, unfinished poem)*

So we left home  
And set up a stall in the market place  
Selling apples  
A beggar boy peered under the naphtha flares, lame—  
Eyed, with punctured face.  
They were selling caged birds opposite, but people  
Stopped more often by  
The white mice which climbed on one another's backs  
and shivered.

The boy ran out  
Clutching the worm hollow apples he had snatched  
Into the city  
Streets, where youths gather, gape, whistle, shout,  
Where dirt scratched  
At his eyes and scuttled between the dustbins.  
"My pretty

Stop and talk!"  
The girl steps forward, stretches her lip  
Into a smile  
But he runs faster still, heart and eyes all evasion  
And she'd step  
Back into the doorway, set hand on hip  
And wait a while.

We dowsed the flares  
Boxed our apples. The birds squawked and rushed  
The bars, beat  
Their wings to keep balance, as the birdsellers' wares  
Were piled and pushed  
Out of the market. Everyone hurried. No-one would wait  
But jammed  
In the narrow streets, each competing who could shout  
Loudest at the man in front.  
Dry leaves scurried in the wind. A door slammed.  
The lights went out.  
Two old men walked through the empty square, sent  
To dismantle the stalls;  
Unbolted the trestles, folded the awnings, shuffled away  
Smoking.  
The boy kicked a stone along under the endless walls  
There was nowhere to stay  
And the girl was still waiting . . . . .

DAVID WARD.

## *Town-birds Through and Through*

Richard Hoggart's recent book set going a fair amount of discussion, though not all the people who joined in were with him in his conclusions or shared his standards in the collecting and weighing of evidence, or even agreed with him as to what was evidence. Some, more professionally engaged than Mr. Hoggart, noted it as a deficiency in his book that there was no account of working class political attitudes. Others questioned his analysis of contemporary mass culture and doubted whether its effect is as pernicious as Mr. Hoggart insists it is. Still others, failing it seems to me to appreciate the difficulties of such a single-handed enterprise in the culture we inhabit, compared his work unfavourably with that of George Bourne. And then of course there was clever Mr. Peter Wildeblood collecting working class idioms largely at Mr. Hoggart's expense. Nevertheless, in a number of the *Cambridge Review* last year, Mr. Hoggart drew our attention to Young and Wilmot's very valuable "Family and Kinship in East London" and brought into clear focus the relation that his work has to theirs. For when all has been said against Mr. Hoggart's book that can fairly be said against it—and it would be unreasonable to suggest that Mr. Hoggart's critics had no truth on their side—his account must strike the alert reader as being at least adequate to the situation we find ourselves in, and reading his book therefore is a dismaying experience in a number of fairly obvious ways. It is at least clear that the culture he describes in the first part of his book is being swiftly eroded, and we ought to drop our, in the main, departmental reservations about his work in a common effort to find out what is happening, what the future of a large number of people in our society is likely to be like.

Sociology has, to put it mildly, no adequate footing in Cambridge. And in some circles in Cambridge, noticeably in the English Faculty, there is what I can only describe as a dangerous ignorance present about the work done by a number of sociologists in this country. Now, I am not qualified to talk about "Sociology" or even to show in detail what I have in mind when I use the term. But I will, in this article, indicate a small number of sociological works which seem to me suggestive, valuable and relevant, works which we ought all to know about. My list includes Young and Wilmot's "Family and Kinship in East London"; J. P. Morey's "Family and Neighbourhood" (a pilot survey carried out in Oxford); and "Neighbourhood and Community" (a piece of work done by the department of Social Studies in Liverpool and Sheffield on housing estates in those two towns). Each of these books in different ways describes the physical context upon which Mr. Hoggart's work throws such a revealing light. Things may not be as bad as Mr. Hoggart says they are, but if the processes described in these four books are

allowed to go on without continual and delicate scrutiny, then the future is his. He is prophetically accurate, even if not actually so.

One of the major social changes that has been going on in England for the past thirty years is the clearing of slum property and the moving of large numbers of people to housing estates usually on the outskirts of some large conurbation. It has been going on for long enough and has involved sufficiently large numbers of people for sociologists to investigate in concrete detail the kind of life lived on them. The surveys listed above were carried out independently of each other, and the reader has to allow for a fairly high degree of local variation. The Liverpool estate, for example, was set up at the beginning of the war by the Ministry of Aircraft Production to house workers engaged in war work in a nearby factory. As the majority of its inhabitants were arbitrarily directed there and were obliged to give up established homes all over the country, it is clear that living on it almost necessarily had to be a disagreeable business for most of them. To that extent the estate is not typical for the purposes of relevant analysis, but, in a way all too familiar where allegedly temporary projects are concerned in England, it has lingered on and was felt to be worth analysis as recently as 1951. One assumes that it is still there. However, the classically perfect cases of planned rehousing are given in "Family and Kinship in East London" and in the Sheffield section of "Neighbourhood and Community". Both these works, as well as being the best of the three, deal with the transference of slum dwellers by the local authority. Nevertheless, all of them, when variations have been allowed for, using the same methods of investigation (depth interviews of selected families) arrive at similar conclusions, that the life lived on the estates is poor in quality, and that the description of them as "communities" is more a technical convenience than a meaningful human term. Of course, one needs to avoid the risk of rigid and universal generalisations, but the most provisional and tentative judgements seem to me, and to the sociologists concerned, legitimate cause for anxiety. Mr. Mogey is an exception here. He feels that the inhabitants of the Barton Estate, though deprived of the satisfactions of the more traditional and complex life of St. Ebbes, achieve a wider and fuller participation in the social life of Oxford. And this somewhat startling conclusion (startling in relation to the context he has described) goes quite against the evidence he has himself supplied, and involves him in some risky attempts at value judgements.

He notes for example that the married couples on the estate show a higher degree of interest in each other and in their own homes, and deduces from this that married couples on the estate are in some way more happy in their marriages, that their marriages are more satisfactory than those of their counterparts in St. Ebbes. Yet with Young and Wilmot's account of their estate in mind one



has to radically question Mr. Mogey. A married couple on a housing estate, and an estate designed in terms of middle class conceptions—a house and garden symbolising a maximum of formal segregation—are flung together whether they will or no by the absence of opportunities for working kinship and friendly relations, and by the need to utilise their financial resources in accordance with the demands the new house makes on them. New furniture is necessary, the garden calls for attention, and there commences the tragic development of consumer status—so well described by Young and Wilmot—whose evaluating standards are the car, the lawnmower, the curtains, the television aerial; the individual himself, with the genuine personal characteristics that are his, counting for nothing. Mr. Mogey notes the considerable hostility on the estate—compared with St. Ebbes—to “other people’s children”; so perhaps what he describes as a more satisfactory marriage is in fact an enforced isolation generating its own rather unattractive defence mechanisms. A family after all—whether Lord Hailsham will or no—is not a narrowly personal creation, but needs the enriching contact both of friends and of a helpful kinship environment, and of “other people’s children”. In their absence vital needs are frustrated. Mr. Mogey does describe, almost with the skill of a novelist, the failure of the Barton Community centre, and its failure was the death of social life on the estate. It is impossible to believe that the frustration set up by such a significant failure does not gradually seep into individual lives, modifying their values, limiting their opportunities for satisfaction, and painfully reducing any possibility for something more than the most elementary kinds of contact with other people. You nod at them in the street, and that’s about it. At this point, as Mr. Hoggart suggested in his *Cambridge Review* article, the mass media prove irresistibly attractive, and the ‘community’ speedily degenerates into the Subtopia of ‘Outrage’.

Clearly certain basic remedies are possible. Young and Wilmot for example recommend the bloc transference of whole streets and kinship units, so that on the new estates the old relationships are preserved intact. At the same time they are hostile to estates that are really no more than inferior middle class housing arrangements, that cannot but be profoundly unsympathetic to working class values brought from the intimacies of the slum, the court and the decaying terrace house. I am not pleading for the retention of the slum, but clearly, to working people with that kind of background a middle class estate layout represents a bleak social ethic to which they themselves are not, fortunately, accustomed. One only has to read the moving accounts in “Family and Kinship” of family relationships and of the archetypal events in Bethnal Green life to see what I have in mind—the rallying round at childbirth and the compassionate description, based on a living sense of people, of a local wedding. These stay with the reader. Inevitably one queries



the entire 'house and garden' concept of social life, and prefers instead something like the L.C.C.'s Roehampton experiment—half-a-dozen white skyscraper blocks of flats standing separately on a hill whose rich vegetation has been left untouched. The effect is immensely pleasing and seems to me at any rate among the most important English architectural achievements of the twentieth century. And of course, one asks for planning in terms of the needs of the people who are going to live on the estates, that starts from the community values that many of them still have, in spite of the obvious restrictive effects of slum experience.

The final answers do clearly lie in intelligent and sensitive planning, and in the co-operation of architect, local government official, and finally the school teacher. It is a question of noting the values that people do actually hold, in Young and Wilmot's Bethnal Green, Williams' Gosforth, and Mogey's St. Ebbes, and of providing the people with a physical environment in which their values are encouraged and enhanced, their potential willingness to assist each other and share the common burdens unavoidable in human experience. All one has so far is the separate yet common accounts noted here—failed neighbour relations, enforced isolation, the destruction of recognised and familiar responses, shared responses, to the demands that living necessarily makes. Mr. Hoggart felt that we were lucky, when all was said and done, to have the working class we still have, and it would be tragic to doom it to unimaginative official planning and to a painful aping of middle class domestic experience. I stress the fact of the working class, because it is to this class, inevitably, that the damage is being done, and because they are the main body of our society.

Gratitude for responsible and sensitive work is my feeling as I read books of the kind considered here, but with it goes an unavoidable feeling of regret, partly at what they show to be happening, partly at the national indifference to their work (Mr. Hoggart, quite apart from the real value of his book, is something of a fashionable cult) and partly at the narrowly partisan hostility to sociology encountered up here. Both in England and America many sociologists are satisfying and rewarding to read, for their sensibility, the sharpness of their insights, and the genuine creative intelligence they reveal. They know, many of them, what is happening to their society, and are ultimately responsible figures in a way that too many people, novelists, politicians and literary critics are not. They should be read, and they should be read with a willing and open mind, having more to offer than we can learn on our own, or through contact with (say) our barber, our coalman, or a bus conductor or two, for whom we have no more than our unchallenged sentimental prejudices and our unexamined conviction that "we know".

W. I. CARR.

## Two New Periodicals

A lively periodical literature is a necessity in a society such as ours, in which the printed word is still the most important means of communication. Consequently the periodical literature of a society might be conveniently taken as an index of its cultural vitality, and the degree to which the reviews seem to be aware of their function as a measure of the degree to which their publics *force* them to be concerned with the most important things. If this is so, I should say that there are two periodicals recently born, which are evidence of renewed vitality and hope among at least a small section of the reading public. *The New Reasoner* and *Universities and Left Review* seem to me to have far more claim than any other English reviews to be performing the proper function of a periodical.

Now, in writing of these matters, one is naturally compelled to look back to certain fundamental essays upon criticism and periodical literature which were written by Matthew Arnold in the last part of the 19th century. It may seem to some of my readers that in recommending two periodicals which are distinctly committed to a political viewpoint I am taking issue with, for instance "The Function of Criticism at The Present Time" or "The Literary Influence of Academies". Far from it. Arnold wrote at a time when sectarianism in politics and religious matters was carried to absurd lengths, when dogma and partisan pig-headedness threatened to choke the life out of the nation. In order to have free play of mind it was necessary to break free of the old orthodox patterns. We, on the other hand, live at a time when apathy and carelessness in political matters is the most commonly expressed and most fashionable attitude—at a time when the most hair-raising and distressing decisions (for instance NATO's determination to use Hydrogen Weapons in the event of an attack with conventional armaments) need be defended only with an appeal to the kind of prejudice which it is the habit of an irresponsible press to propagate so very efficiently. Notice, for instance, how much the official arguments for the retention of nuclear weapons depend upon evasion and euphemism rather than upon fact. "Deterrent" for example—how antiseptic the word is! how clean, how mild, how homely! you might almost wash your socks in it!

On the other hand the most typical note of the *New Reasoner* and *Universities and Left Review* is the insistence that we must examine the facts before making our decisions. See, for instance, the *U & L.R.* pamphlet "The Insiders" (bound in with the 3rd issue) which is a critique of the Labour Party's "Industry and Society", and John Hughes on Steel nationalisation in *NR2*—both of them excellent examples of the kind of factual study and analysis which must surely be done again and again for every one of the

public institutions if the old democratic catchwords—(Government of the people, *by* the people, etc.)—are to keep any meaning at all.

I've said that the public's duty is to force the periodicals to be concerned with the most important things. Well, what *are* the most important things? This isn't a question for a laconic Pilate or a smiling Sakya-Muni—not a matter of distant absolutes, but of urgent needs—and I think we might get some kind of a lead as to their nature by looking at the "angry" attitudes of discontent which have been so loudly expressed lately.

This is the kind of thing that emerges most clearly—that full employment and a paternal government are not enough for the younger intellectuals, that life in Britain seems to them to be parochial, smug, and constricting. Their frustrated idealism will not accept the comforting assurance: "You've never had it so good", and is impatient with the false ideals venerated during those uncomfortable two minutes at the end of every public entertainment (who doesn't rush for the exit in the hope of avoiding "The Queen"?). They are bored by stiff-upper-lippery on the rivers Kwai or Plate, make awful iconoclastic faces at the comfortable culture of the academic establishment, seethe with disgust at the smoothly machined idiocy and prurience of the popular press, and equally at the balanced bloodlessness of journals designed for top people. Jimmy Porter's hystical "There are no brave causes left" may be untrue, but it's certainly an accurate representation of a common-enough attitude.

It's felt that somehow there is a conspiracy to pass over in silence a fundamental paucity of values, a lack of dynamic in English society. Moral bankruptcy and stasis, however sweetened with material comforts and light entertainment, eventually begin to cloy. Or: one gets tired of bread and circuses.

All this doesn't get us very far, however. Protest and discontent inevitably precede change, but some kind of constructive thought is necessary if one is to be assured of a change which leads somewhere.

John Osborne declares that it's his business to give people lessons in feeling—they can, he says, think afterwards. Let's leave aside for the moment the fact that a writer with this as his declared object must peddle something stronger than anything Osborne seems to have in stock. I suppose William Morris was trying to do more or less the same kind of thing—giving people lessons in feeling, when he shocked all his friends by trying to bring the "Earthly Paradise" down to earth. Neither did *he* claim to show people how to think—in a letter to Andreas Scheu he writes: "I want statistics terribly: you see I am but a poet and artist, good for nothing but sentiment."

And sure enough, like Osborne, sentiment was the weapon he used, the spreading of discontent was his aim. "News from No-

where" is of course as fundamentally regressive, dissatisfying, unreal, as many people have found Mr. Osborne's work, and yet it has one saving grace: it attracted attention to a new way of thinking. It provided an ideal for the new Labour movement. Morris was surely justified in using his proved mythopoeic gifts in the service of a programme of practical action.

Enough and too much has already been said about Mr. Osborne: I've less to say about the nauseating quietism of Amis, or the fearful, tentative humanism of Wain, and nothing at all to say about Messrs. Wilson, Holroyd, and Hopkins. But they all have one thing in common, and it isn't just anger. Arnold said of the Romantic poets what one may say with even greater confidence about this bunch: that with all their energy "they did not know enough".

Arnold, of course, saw the solution to the rigidity and smugness of his own society in terms of the propagation of the critical spirit, the cracking up of the surface ice so that the current of ideas could once more flow freely. And to some extent the periodicals which sprang up during his lifetime—*The Cornhill*, the *Fortnightly*, the *Contemporary*, *Macmillan's*, and *The Nineteenth Century*—fulfilled this function. They opened up their columns to anything that was fresh, intelligent, and constructive—and admittedly to a great deal that was not. Any of you who own the Penguin volume of selections from *The Nineteenth Century*, for instance, may check to see how true it is to say that the ground work on social problems which eventually produced the idea of the Welfare State was done in these journals. Students of literature, too, will know how fresh and lively still, are the critical essays of Arnold, Stephen, and Henry James which first appeared there.

Is there anything like that now? In the *London Magazine* we have a periodical devoted to the literature of twenty years ago, in *Encounter* a subsidized platform for the American way of life. The *Twentieth Century* is better, but still confused and flat. The *Spectator* breeds its Maudes and Utleys, never rises above the clever, and usually sinks far below it, while the *New Statesman*, though not so uniformly vulgar, is all too frequently timorous, indecisive and dull.

But there is *Universities and Left Review*, and there is the *New Reasoner*. The first was started in the spring of last year. The first number was sold out in such a short time that a second printing had to be ordered. It refers, you will notice, to the "Universities" in its title. And yet it is only stocked by one bookseller and one newsagent in Cambridge. The circulation of the second, *The New Reasoner*, is, it is true, more modest—about 3,000. But it is a periodical which it is necessary for every person with a social conscience to know. Try and order a copy from any Cambridge bookseller. They've never even heard of it.



It's my opinion, however, that in these two periodicals is to be found the most hopeful means of channelling the vague, generalized discontent that has been so loudly voiced recently. Or at least they should show the way to other groups to express their own solutions with freshness and vigour.

The *New Reasoner* came into existence in the summer of 1957. Its contributors are, for the most part, ex-members of the Communist Party (who gave up their party tickets over the attitude of the C.P. leaders towards the Hungarian Revolution) and left-wing members of the Labour Party. E. P. Thompson is the author of "William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary", the other editor, John Saville, is author of "Ernest Jones, Chartist". If one wished to trace back their political ancestry, it is to this kind of figure that one would turn first. Both Jones and Morris were warm, human, and hard fighters, both entered politics because of a concern for social justice, rather than from an intellectual admiration for the neatness and precision of Marx's thought. Both, at times, become slightly absurd in their intense idealism, and both were middle class in origin. Both, too, were very much internationally minded—Jones was a member of the First International, while the Eastern Question agitation played a great part in Morris's conversion to Socialism.

It would be simple-minded, though to leave it at that, just simply to say that the *New Reasoner* attempts to carry on the tradition of Morris, Mann, Burns and Keir Hardie. Perhaps I could explain what I mean by referring to one English Socialist whom one would *not* name as an ancestor to the *New Reasoner* group. Morris too, "left the party" over the question of leadership, and the "Stalinist" then was H. M. Hyndman. Engels says of Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation in 1892:

"After all, the S.D.F. is purely a sect. It has ossified Marxism into a dogma and, by rejecting *every* labour movement which is not orthodox Marxism (and that a Marxism which contains much that is erroneous) that is, by pursuing the exact opposite of the policy recommended in the *Manifesto*, it renders itself incapable of ever becoming anything else but a sect."

Like Morris, like almost the whole of the intellectual section of the Communist Party, Thompson and Saville have learnt that brittle, hardened dogma, like a rusty old crowbar, cracks every time you try to prize a stone away from your path. As a result, they're nearer to the spirit of Marx's writings than English socialists have ever been before. It's a healthy sign, for instance, that they tend to pay more than usual attention to the early writings of Marx (see Kenneth Muir: "Marx's Conversion to Communism", *NR3*) in which the humanistic basis of Marx's philosophy is more explicit and evident than anywhere else.



As I have said, the most encouraging feature of all is their freshness, and their concern for the facts. A group which contains so many ex-members of the Communist Party who were forced so dramatically by the 20th Congress and the Hungarian Revolution to return to facts which had long been suppressed, will not unnaturally find facts and the opportunity to analyse freely, very stimulating. The balanced way in which they make their criticisms of the Soviet Union is especially noticeable, and one feels that these criticisms are made not *despite* the fact that the commentators are Marxists, but *because* they are Marxists . . . Malcolm MacEwen, for instance, has some very acute and damaging things to say about Soviet power policies in Foreign affairs in NR4.

The value of all this is, I think obvious to intelligent people of every political persuasion. It provides at once a challenge and an example. It will be interesting to see if there is sufficient vitality left in the parties of the Right and Centre to produce reviews which will undertake a similar basic revaluation of the Conservative, the Liberal, or the Gaitskell-pink positions.

*Universities* and *Left Review* is different in many ways—particularly in that it is less ambitiously concerned with the theory of socialism than the *New Reasoner*. There's a tendency for its contributors to be younger, which is perhaps cancelled out by another tendency—to get in a big name or two in every issue. There is, too, slightly more leaning towards cultural and critical articles—Lindsay Anderson, Peter de Francia and John Berger make out their cases for "commitment" in numbers 1 and 2, while there's an interesting symposium on Richard Hoggart's "The Uses of Literacy" in number 2. I suspect there's some disagreement among the editors as to whether it should be "cultural" or "political" in emphasis—I also suspect that it is out of this disagreement that much of the value of the periodical springs.

There's less need to introduce *U & LR* to a Cambridge public, even though contributors from this University are depressingly few in its columns, and there's little point in emphasizing the differences between the two, because they are alike in so many ways. Both, for instance, are very much concerned with racial problems, African and Arab nationalism: Paul Hogarth's drawings and account of his visit to South Africa in NR2, for instance, are very moving. Both, as I have said, publish from time to time factual studies of public institutions such as "The Insiders" (*U & LR*3), and both frequently have important comments on Foreign Affairs. A symposium in NR4, for instance, attempts to give shape and weight to the often repeated but never yet satisfactorily defined plea that Britain must adopt a neutral policy, mediating between the great power blocs of East and West.

Such breadth of scope, freshness and attention to fact, give these two reviews their claim to be recognized as the most significant

periodicals of today. I sincerely hope that those who still wish to cry "There are no brave causes left" may get some benefit from their pages. For years now, "the man in the street" has been an onlooker, whether angry or contented, in the game of blind man's bluff which has dominated world politics. There's some sign that this situation may be nearing an end, particularly in the case of the most urgent of all contemporary questions—that of nuclear warfare. The spirit shown in the march to Aldermaston was one of the most moving, and may prove to be one of the most significant things in recent English history. But it's particularly important that the kind of re-thinking which must go along with any re-awakening of a sense of communal responsibility, must be done with the freshness and lack of pomposity which are typical of these two journals. Let people with other views take up the challenge, join battle with them, and we may soon have an intellectual atmosphere as fresh and as lively as that of the 70's and 80's, with their *Cornhills* and *Fortnightlys* and *Contemporaries*.

DAVID WARD.

## *One More Round*

*I Like It Here* : Kingsley Amis (Gollancz, 13/6).

*The Contenders* : John Wain (Macmillan, 13/6)

Kingsley Amis, we know, is the self-appointed scourge of the phoney. "It is the phoney", says Walter Allen, "to which his nerve ends are trembling exposed, and at the least suspicion of the phoney he goes tough". He is the maker of rude noises at public occasions, the sticker of pins in respectable bottoms. His satiric method is a matter of grabbing a set of conventional ideas and kicking them when they're down. At his best he reminds us of things in Chaplin, like the unveiling ceremony where Charlie is discovered asleep in the lap of the public statue, or of routines from *Me and My Girl*. In his new novel he gets busy on the perversions of the Abroad-habit and its devotees. And the process of deromanticization is managed with his customary art. *I Like It Here* provides some amusing and warranted ridicule of certain pretensions. Garnet Bowen, distrustful of his enforced holiday in Portugal ("Currency bum, Bowen thought to himself as she left the room. Allowance for self, wife, three children and car bum. Arrangements for drafts on foreign banks bum. Steamer tickets bum . . ."), resembles the

other Amis heroes in being primarily an instrument of his author's cynicism—

"It was a pity that such terrible people said that colours were brighter in the South, because they were right. Oh well, they talked so much that they were bound to be right sometimes, just by accident. Bowen looked nervously about for peasants. It would be unendurable if they all turned out to be full of instinctive wisdom and natural good manners and unselfconscious grace and a deep, inarticulate understanding of death. But surely they couldn't, could they?"

Of course they couldn't. By this point in the book everybody brought up on *Lucky Jim* has recognised the signs and can register the appropriate reaction. But it is disconcerting, as well as wearing, to be expected to go on reproducing the same reaction indefinitely. And the effect of Mr. Amis's irony would be greater if he did not treat *everything* in the same way. However tremblingly exposed his nerve ends may be to the least suspicion of the phoney, it is soon plain that they are pretty insensitive to anything correspondingly genuine. The most faintly serious reflection is not safe from his scepticism. Nor is there scarcely a situation in which phoneyiness is not discovered lurking—

"*Self-exiled Harold wanders forth again*, he thought to himself without really meaning to, *with nought of hope less, but with less of gloom*. (He excused himself for falling a victim to intimations of culture by remembering that his last reading of Byron had been aimed at eking out his review of a new biography, and thus could not fairly be classed as voluntary)."

It is unthinkable that Bowen should have read Byron for pleasure: just as it is unthinkable that living abroad is anything more than a matter of putting up with swarms of flies and objectionable lavatories and cramped houses and the funny way people talk. (We are treated to each of these riotous inconveniences in turn, with the mother-in-law joke gratuitously thrown in.) As Mr. Amis's prototype hero has got older he has discarded his angry young mannerisms in favour of a sort of genial Philistinism that now seems his author's chief inspiration. What irritates him is not so much the phoney as anything that threatens to stir him from the comfortable inertia into which he has settled—

"Remember how tremendous it was in the canteen having sausages and chips and a cup of tea and listening to the Forces' programme? While some poor sod in the same barrack-room was on guard? Same idea. Going abroad teaches you how important small comforts are."

The moral of *I Like It Here* seems to be that all that matters is comfort, security, being ordinary and living in England.

Which may well be true, but it is hardly the kind of idea that good novels are made of, or even very long ones. *I Like It Here* is

very short. Its central episodes are meagre and improbable enough, but they have to be perfunctorily filled out with literary clowning (the inevitable parody of an impossibly bad novel), and irrelevant discussion of the Salazar regime. Some sections read like extracts from the travel book that Mr. Amis couldn't bring himself to write. Even the comedy is convincing only in patches: Mr. Amis seems to have lost his ability to sustain a big comic scene. When he does try, as here in the rendering of the customary drunken spree, the result is laboured and disorganized. What he can do well is suggest the subtleties of self-consciousness that we are all familiar with in our reactions ("Keeping on the alert for being mature and responsible and so on took it out of him. It was so seldom one got the amber light that would give one time to get everything nicely lined up for a spot of mature etc. behaviour"): but this sort of genuineness is hardly characteristic. Altogether *I Like It Here* is an odd confusion of a novel, sadly uncertain at any point of what it is meant to be about. And I cannot see Mr. Amis's next attempt being any better unless he finds himself a more positive inspiration than he seems to have here.

But Mr. Amis is an artist. Which is more, alas, than one can say for John Wain, whose third novel, *The Contenders*, has just been published. Nobody, it is true, can accuse Mr. Wain of not knowing what his book is about: the difficulty is to stop him telling us so often. As his portentous title suggests, he has a Theme: and he is so afraid of our forgetting it that he repeats its gist on every other page. His theme is the subtle corruption that follows devotion to self-advancement, and the way it shows itself in the conflicting lives and careers of two men from a Midlands town. Robert Lamb is impulsive and erratic and becomes an artist, Ned Roper is methodical and calculating and becomes an industrialist: and their progress is reported by Joe Shaw, who is fat, ordinary, works on the local paper, and has no absorbing ambitions. Few readers are likely to take exception to what Mr. Wain actually says: it is always good to see the Success-mongers discomfited and simple genuineness rewarded. The trouble is that he *says* it, instead of letting it emerge from something shown. Every scene in his novel has to be scrupulously explained to us before, during and after it happens. Here is how he serves up the problem of Love—

"I began to see where I was. It was useless, plainly, to argue with either of them, because they were committed to what was, fundamentally, the same position. They both saw women not as people but as *instruments*. Stocker saw them as instruments of pleasure, Ned as instruments of prestige. Stocker's argument was crude, Ned's—on the surface—more subtle. But in either case there was only one way of bringing them round, and that was to get them to see a woman as a *person*. But what was the good? If I were to tell Ned that an unsuccessful, obscure and



unambitious man might find himself a wife who *as a human being* was as good as anyone available for the most famous and powerful—what good would that do? Again, imagine trying to tell Stocker that if he would take to exploring women in depth, rather than brushing over each one on his way to the next, he might find some pretty surprising things. He couldn't believe any such thing if he wanted to.

"All right, I had them taped . . ."

Yes, Mr. Wain has them taped, and he goes on taping them for nearly 300 pages in the same wordy and elaborate way, italicizing the key words in case we miss the point. *The Contenders* is all like this. Each new situation is pinned down before it can get away and subjected to a searching analysis. At every stocktaking the narrator, who appears to have little to do besides sit around and worry about his friends, heralds his discoveries with "I began to see where I was", or "Then I suddenly realised", or "I understood", or "Suddenly the truth slammed into me" (this last an unusually swift illumination—the process generally takes a couple of pages). "Perhaps", wonders the *Observer* critic, "Mr. Wain's intentions were more solemn than his lively style suggests". I do not doubt the solemnity of Mr. Wain's intentions, but find it hard to get excited about the liveliness of his diffuse and laborious style.

Or about his basic dramaturgy. Most of *The Contenders* is taken up by talk, about and around the theme and its elaborations. But even when, instead of talking about his characters, he shows them actually doing something, Mr. Wain seems extravagantly fearful of leaving anything to be inferred. We are not even allowed to rest content with our judgment of the salacious Stocker: a scene has to be staged in which he indulges an improbable burst of self-criticism—

"I never really get anything out of a girl because I'm always in such a hurry to move on to the next one. I sometimes wonder what they're really like."

"I began to be really afraid that he would settle down to a deep discussion of his fundamental problems . . ."

We are glad he doesn't too. This episode reveals the weakness of Mr. Wain's dramatic sense: all the live action he offers suffers from this sort of obviousness. His 'scenes' perform the duty of lantern slides at a lecture—they illustrate the theme rather than realise it. So many of the novel's situations tend to be stagey and contrived, and to read like something out of a Hollywood second-feature—like the quarrel in the factory designed to demonstrate the force of Ned's personality ("He stepped quickly and decisively into the gap between them . . . and gripped each of them by the shoulder"), or the impossible climax when Robert gate-crashes Ned's wedding reception and proposes a toast to Success ("Nobody moved. I couldn't bear it. I had to do something to break the spell"). While



the story's resolution, in which the unremarkable narrator walks off with the pretty girl and leaves his friends to get on with their contending, is about the most patent piece of wishful thinking one is ever likely to find.

Now that everybody seems to have stopped talking about the Movement, one might legitimately begin to wonder whether it ever really existed. In an earlier issue of *Delta*, one of the present Editors gives some impressively documented reasons for believing it to have been largely the creation of its publicists. Anyway, it is difficult to see where it can move from here. Mr. Amis still devotes his considerable talents to the propagation of a boorish set of attitudes: Mr. Wain continues to parade more morals than art. *I Like It Here* is the genial grumbling of a man who has stopped caring very much about anything: *The Contenders* is a critic's novel, a sort of academic do-it-yourself, which, though full of sound and fury, manages to signify very little. The sad thing is that, under a cultural dispensation which awards the toys and sweets to Messrs. Wain and Amis and even (as is noted on another page) gives its fashionable sanction to Richard Hoggart's discoveries, the writer of real distinction who declines to be bracketed with any group, like J. D. Salinger, tends to get ignored. (*The Catcher in the Rye* makes use of a tradition of vernacular narrative to record a wholly modern sensibility, after the manner of *Huckleberry Finn*. Mr. Salinger's reaction to contemporary brands of phoney is considerably more sensitive and genuine than anything Mr. Amis is able, or cares, to offer: and it is instructive to compare, say, Mr. Wain's treatment of Love with Holden Caulfield's meditations on the same theme.) The reviewer's impulse to grab every writer as he appears and label him appropriately before he can escape is responsible for much of the cock-eyed view of the literary scene that prevails. Which is depressing, though hardly surprising. After all, it is a lot easier, as well as more comforting, to talk about abstractions like Movements, or the consciousness of a generation, than about the value of what an individual writer has to say. This way one is spared the unpleasant effort of having to discriminate, or of actually getting involved in anything one reads. "In any event", happily concludes Mr. Wain's *Observer* critic, "work of art or not, it is always readable". Well, so is the Ecclesiastical Column of *The Times*. And that has the advantage of only costing fourpence.

JOHN KIMBER.

## Correspondence

The Editors of *Delta*.

London, W.9.  
March, 1958.

SIRS,

I was about to write a reply to Richard Weber's article "Poetic Potential In Ireland" but I see he has covered himself well in advance. He says "It is obviously difficult to write fairly . . . from this patently immature attitude." This is quite true. It is difficult. And Mr. Weber is nothing if not patently immature. What surprises me however is that in spite of Mr. Weber's own admission of immaturity *Delta* still saw fit to publish an article which purported to give Cambridge the low-down on what is being written in Ireland and the conditions of writing over there. The most charitable view one can take of this is that the editors simply did not read the article before publishing it.

For the benefit of Cambridge and the editors of *Delta* (I assume they have now read the article and are suitably appalled) may I make one or two brief comments?

1. The conditions of writing in Ireland are *not* disclosed in Mr. Weber's article.
2. His views on the poetry of Patrick Kavanagh are sheer nonsense. Mr. Kavanagh's *A Soul For Sale* is a remarkable collection of verse, and certainly one of the most important published by an Irish poet for many a long year. Like most poets, Patrick Kavanagh writes prose rather badly. If he considers Yeats not to have been a poet at all he is not the only one. Quite a number of Irish writers take the same view, and certainly Yeats would hardly be impressed by the defence positions put up by Mr. Weber.
3. Ewart Milne has been writing poetry for a great many years and is, without doubt, one of Ireland's leading poets. If he is praised in England he is damned in Ireland. This has always been so. It does not apply only to Ewart Milne. Every Irish writer of merit has had to leave Ireland and seek proper recognition elsewhere. When the rest of the world recognises him he is made a Freeman of Dublin. Nothing changes. I imagine that Mr. Weber does not like Mr. Milne's poetry because it is not like Mr. Weber's prose. God Save Ireland!
4. Valentin Iremonger's *Reservations* was published some time ago and did, I believe, win the AE Memorial Award. If so, he is probably the only winner of that prize who really deserved it. He is a far better poet than many of his detractors would have us imagine.

5. Anthony Cronin's recent collection *Poems* deserves far more attention than it has been given. It is not my kind of poetry (no more than mine would be his!) but it is the first collection of modern verse I have read several times without suffering acute pains. Mr. Cronin's poetry enlarges the experience of the reader. What more can one ask?
6. Mr. Weber's own poetry is far too imitative (see Eliot see Milne). It is also far too prosy. Imitation is natural in a young poet. It depends solely on who you imitate. But Mr. Weber has gone on much too long. It is now time he found his own voice. Oddly enough, I think he has one.

Yours sincerely,

PATRICK GALVIN.

Creeksea Hall,

The Editors of *Delta*.

Burnham on Crouch, Essex.

SIRS,

April, 1958.

Ignoring Mr. Weber's remarks about myself and other poets, past and present, in his article "Poetic Potential In Ireland", what exactly would be the point of Irish poets writing *only* in Irish in the future, if what they had to report and say was precisely the same, except for geography, as that which any English poet of the future had to report and say?

Up to date, the salient feature of all Irish writing, whether written in Irish or English, is that it reports and says something different—call it a different attitude to life, if you like—than and from English writing. Mr. Weber, and Mr. Kinsella too, for that matter, are clearly concerned to make Irish writing over into something closer to the model of present day English writing, and especially poetry; something that would seem to fit the fashion of what is known as "The Movement" over here. But, let us be quite clear that while they may feel themselves entitled to do so, they are doing neither Irish literature, nor the conception of Ireland as a nation with individual and separate cultural values and characteristics different from those of Britain, no good service whatever.

Your editorial states that you find most contemporary English poetry full of "aridities and evasions". I am sorry about this, though I fear it is true in the main, but it can scarcely be a matter for rejoicing if the younger Irish poets ape the English fashion, and strive to reduce Irish poetry to the same or a similar degree of aridity, and an even more bitter, because it approaches a treasonable, degree of evasion.

Yours sincerely,

EWART MILNE.

## Notices

### **A BEGINNING : Dom Moraes** (The Parton Press, 8s. 6d.)

This slim volume contains 21 poems by Dom Moraes, an Oxford undergraduate. It is in no way a startling collection. Most of the poems are conceived in time-honoured, not to say jaded, rhythms, and are suffused with a dreaminess fostered by a romantic diction which too often arouses stock responses. When the poet does move from this archaic language and attitude, he drops readily into the 'blood', 'sweat', 'flesh', and 'crag' which constitute the poetic diction of the present age.

Apart from a few attempts to bolder his statements, Mr. Moraes seems unable to break away from a wistfulness for the past, or from self-pity. He does not, however, fall into self-indulgence, and one poem, 'An Ordinary Care', deals with self-pity in an unself-pitying way. But apart from a hint of a future development, the poems show Mr. Moraes as a poet who is continually looking back.

In one poem, 'Landscape Painter', he speaks of an artist who is dissatisfied with himself because his style, taste and manner are too correct and too easily recognised; something is lacking, it might be originality, it might be passion; he feels as if he is wearing "a dead man's coat". Mr. Moraes would benefit greatly from a study of this poem.

We find hints that Mr. Moraes is coming to see that the poetry does not matter, and he at times achieves a very satisfying certainty of statement.

'A Man Dreaming', with its low tone and well-handled form, shows the writer's genuine talent, as does 'Shyness' which is an unselfconscious description of the bitter-sweetness of a poet's life, and the relief gained when internal struggles are externalised in verse. Here the forms of the poems restrain strong feeling, whereas elsewhere we are inclined to ask as we read one of the many shapely poems 'Where's the bloody horse?'

Perhaps the most pleasing aspect of this collection is its pervading gentleness, and the lack of arrogance; one hopes, however, that this is not a case of

"I never dared be radical when young  
For fear it would make me conservative when old".

B. J.

### **THE SHAPING SPIRIT: A. Alvarez** (Chatto, 15s.)

Mr. Alvarez sets out to trace the development of the mainstream of modern poetry, by "distinguishing the truly modern from the merely contemporary". The conclusion is that the most influential innovations have come out of America, primarily through the

necessary concern of Pound and Eliot to forge a tradition for themselves. In English verse, Lawrence and Yeats, the two most significant geniuses, have not innovated, but only extended the existing tradition.

The thesis is developed in eight essays, all but one being considerations of individual poets: most of the essays have appeared separately in magazines. This method has naturally led to the inclusion of material that is not central to the thesis: the chapter on Hart Crane, for instance, contributes little to the main argument by proving that he was a gifted lyric poet who wanted to write epics. And the only really unconvincing chapter takes twenty pages to argue that Auden is no more than a skilled technician in light verse, and that his work of the 'thirties now appears to be concerned with comparatively "trivial" things that have little significance for the post-war generation. That may be so (though I don't think so), but the length of the argument makes it out of place here.

My only other quibble is with the coupling of Eliot and Yeats in one essay, as it appeared originally in *The Twentieth Century*, because one "lacks the dimension of human error", the other doesn't. Of several reasons for collocating them, this is one of the more flimsy: it would have been better, surely, to keep to the main American:English antithesis? On Eliot and Yeats individually, however, as well as on Pound (especially), Empson (satisfyingly complete), and Wallace Stevens, Mr. Alvarez is fresh and convincing, and totally avoids any hint of pontificating.

He attempts, with remarkable success, something that I believe is quite new: the elevation of Lawrence to the status of a major poet. I would prefer to regard Lawrence as a major psychologist (Mr. Alvarez says: "The toughness, instead of being in the logic, is in the truth to feeling . . . not to accept any easy formulation or avoidance"), and his poetry as being alive and penetrating as his novels but falling short formally of majority: but Mr. Alvarez's case will take a great deal of refutation.

The final chapter, *Art and Isolation*, postulates the "inwardness" of American poets, confronted with a vast unknown public, coupled with their need to find new "literary manners" for a new tradition, as the explanation of the American predominance in modern poetic discoveries. A concise section on Robert Frost isolates him from his contemporaries: E. E. Cummings is rather too peremptorily dismissed; but a few pages on Eberhart, Lowell and Melville push tentative pointers towards the final conclusion, which, with the Eliot and Pound chapters still in mind, makes stimulating thinking.

A. S.



**THE SUCCESSION: Quentin Stevenson** (O.U.P., 10/6d.)

It is the easiest thing in the world to be facetious at Mr. Stevenson's expense. Harder to see that some sort of fair play is achieved. For here is what at first promises to be good enough game for the critic's destructive talents. As when one first reads George Herbert there is a definite temptation to tear him to shreds.

The faults in themselves are not hard to locate. The first verse of *The Dancer: Prolegomenon* is a good example:

'Though not emerging from a deep trance,  
Being cold sober, with pulse stable,  
I, outsider or merely rebel,  
Hear, leaping the usual fence  
Between two routes in a common existence,  
The voice, as 'twere, of Chance. I label  
Hers the authentic voice of France.'

The didactic note that is struck in the last line, often repeated in his other poems, is not by itself unpleasant. The whole stanza shows though both flabbiness of expression and incoherence of thought. *A Common Existence* is only a part of this flabbiness which makes itself felt at every stage in the poem. In a sense he redeems himself at the beginning of the second stanza:

'Being Easter day, on the black table  
Our travestite proclaims her dance.'

This does show some ability to create a concrete image. But the whole poem, as the first stanza illustrates, is at most only half a poem: it does improve as it progresses but it never quite recovers from this first stanza where the words flow slackly and the thoughts only seem to be half-formulated.

Mr. Stevenson does, however, prove that he is a poet who can be enjoyed. *Song* it is true might have come straight out of a hymnal but *Black Madrigal* shows him in a more favourable light. Here is ample evidence of an ability to evoke picturesque images within the rough framework of the iambic pentameter. The didactic note is lost and in its place are both power and urgency:

'Torn shirt at their torn feet becomes a crown  
Or lamp held low to show the painter's care;  
The paupers' bodies are a shade more brown.'

*After 'Le Pont Mirabeau' by Guillaume Apollinaire* is one of Mr. Stevenson's most typical poems. Throughout there is a pleasant enough use of both rhyme and metre but one feels that he does not succeed in what he set out to do, i.e., evoke a particular atmosphere. Too many lines are mere truisms:

'Must I remember once again  
Joy followed always after pain?'

For a moment there is some attempt at precision in 'The bridge formed by our arms' embrace' but it is lost in the succeeding one, 'The waters of our endless longing pass'. The general note of a pleasant naïvety is caught in the refrain

'Night may come and clock may sound,  
Within your shadow I am bound.'

This doesn't even suggest a freshness of experience. The whole poem is flimsy, not written at any great depth.

Mr. Stevenson varies between two types of poem throughout his book. *For A Son At Walsingham* follows in the tradition of *Black Madrigal* and is very beautiful, while *Religious Art* is plainly didactic and as such not very impressive. But one must get quietly accustomed to his manner of verse. A first reading will often convey very little. Perhaps if one reads the same poem some months later it may begin to. It will be interesting to see the direction in which he develops because there is something very non-committal about all his poems at present. He avoids the romantic haze to be expected in any poet praised by Dame Sitwell and at his best shows a keen and adroit handling of words and material. He should, however, as Mr. Terence Tiller has done, take plenty of time before submitting his second volume.

J. H.

### ANOTHER SEPTEMBER: Thomas Kinsella

(Dolmen Press, 10/6d.)

Thomas Kinsella, who was the subject of an article by Vincent Buckley in our Irish Supplement last February, has now published his volume of poems, *Another September*. It is the Poetry Book Society's Spring Choice. Several of the poems were printed in the Supplement.

Kinsella is conceded to be Ireland's finest living poet; his imagery is varied and alive: "a tree of nerves vividly breaking"; "let us make articulate wings of idle hands". The danger, which sometimes overtakes him, is that he can easily pile too many colours on the canvas. There is a quality of excitement in his best poems, especially an excitement with words; he can use technical terms without awkwardness, and he generally avoids any hint of twilight incantation. Many of the poems are love-lyrics; he writes in a variety of verse-forms, which are strict but never constricting.

Mr. Buckley especially recommended him to an undergraduate audience for "a kind of seriousness, a deep play of intelligence, which has almost gone out of English poetry".

A. S.

## UNIVERSITIES POETRY ONE:

(Editors : Bryan A. Reed and Bryan Tyson, 3/6.)

This is the first number of a representative anthology of undergraduate poetry to come out twice a year. The key-word is representative : and because it is the poems fall into two categories. On the one hand there are those printed because they are good and on the other those printed because they are the best of the bad lot sent in by some one university. A high standard has been sacrificed to quantity and representativeness, and what emerges is of interest less in a poetic way than in a topographical one. One finds oneself absorbed in comparing the various numbers of pages taken up by the various universities. Taken on this level the magazine is interesting and worth while. *Universities* is the word to be stressed in the title and not *poetry*.

On the other hand, the occasional poem stands out as being of actual poetic value. A few examples are the extracts from Bryan Reed's *Celebration*, *Volcanoes* by Joy Udloff and *The Mad Woman* by Robert Symmonds. If the standard had been kept up to that set by these, the anthology would be of more lasting and less entirely topical value, and a great deal shorter.

B. W.







